

SPEG MCN is a network of health-care professionals in Scotland who have a particular interest in the care of children and young adults who have endocrine conditions.

Produced by SPEG NMCN Nurses sub-group.

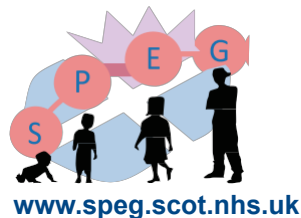
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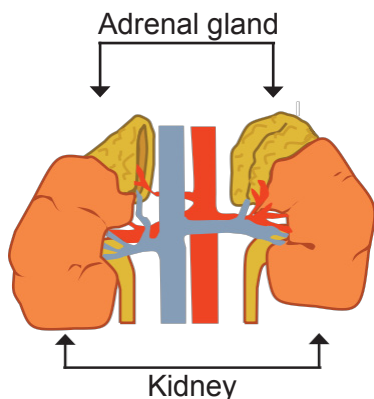
Synacthen test

Information for patients, parents and carers



Your child needs a synacthen test to assess how their adrenal glands are working.

What is the adrenal gland?



There are two adrenal glands. They are small glands that lie just above each kidney.

Cells in the adrenal glands make various hormones.

- Cortisol
- Aldosterone (salt balance hormone)
- Androgens (weak male hormones)

Cortisol is a steroid hormone and is vital for health. It:

- helps the body to respond to stress;
- helps to control blood pressure;
- helps to control normal blood-sugar levels;
- helps to make sure the immune system is working normally.

During the day, the levels of cortisol vary and can be difficult to measure. A synacthen test allows us to measure how much cortisol your child can produce.

Before the test

If your child is already taking hydrocortisone or other steroid medicine, it is very important that you discuss this with your doctor as the dose may need to be altered or stopped before the test.

If your child has had a recent course of steroids we may have to rearrange their appointment. Contact your nurse if you are not sure about this.

How does the test work?

The test involves giving your child a synthetic hormone called synacthen, which is very like a hormone our body makes naturally. It stimulates the adrenal glands to release cortisol into the bloodstream.

What happens on the day of the test

Your child may eat and drink as normal before the test. To do the test, we will need to insert a small plastic tube (cannula) into a vein in your child's arm or hand. We will offer your child some numbing cream (or an alternative) to make this more comfortable. The cannula will stay in place for the whole of the test, allowing us to take blood samples. We will remove the cannula before your child goes home.

After the test

The test results will not be available immediately, but we will discuss them with you at your next clinic appointment (if we have not already contacted you before then).

Possible side effects

Your child should expect to feel well throughout the test.

Who to contact

Please contact your local nurse or hospital doctor if you need more advice.

Doctor's name.....

Contact number.....

Nurse's name.....

Contact number.....